

Jany Deng

Age: 26

Region: Upper Nile

When I was 9 years old, I was watching the cattle, I heard my village get bombed. Flames were everywhere. I thought it was too dangerous to go back to the village. I left the cows and met other boys and we started walking. At the time, I did not know what had happened to my four brothers, four sisters, and parents.

I walked with people I did not know. They became my friends. The most difficult thing was walking without having enough food and water. Sometimes we would get corn from strangers that we passed on the road.

During the long journey, I didn't have much hope. My left leg was badly cut and the infection was spreading to my muscles and bone. I did not have medicine. I was praying and thing about God. I put my faith in Him. This helped me on my journey.

In 1987, after four months of walking, I arrived in a camp in Etang, Ethiopia. I lived in a tent with forty other refugees. I worked hard and earned about a dollar a day. I used this money to buy food. I also saved some money and I bought salt and sugar from people in the village and resold it to the people in the camps. I was able to earn more money this way.

In 1997, when war broke out in Ethiopia, I returned to Sudan. Later, I returned to Etang and stayed there for about a year. In 1992, the United Nations took me by bus to another camp called Dimma. In 1994, I left Dimma and walked with others for six months to a camp called Dadaap in Kenya.

On June 13, 1995, I was able to come to the United States. The United States is a good place to go to school. I have freedom of opportunity. In the United States, people care about each other. It is still a struggle to be a young black man in the United States. It is difficult to learn the culture and language, and can be difficult trying to fit in. I am surprised by the racism I see here. Outside of the center, it is sometimes difficult to feel accepted. Overall, in America, you can be whatever you want to be. It is a democracy.

I just got my U.S. Citizenship on May 20th. I worked at the Lost Boys Center full time as the Outreach Coordinator. Next year, I will graduate from Arizona State University with a bachelor's degree in international social work. Eventually, I would like to be an ambassador or a representative of Sudan in a foreign country. I would like to help the people of Sudan.